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ABSTRACT

A suggested curriculum to be used to teach mass communications in Finnish comprehensive schools is described. Instead of concentrating on either an aesthetic or medium-bound (e.g., film education) approach, this curriculum focuses on the mass media as social institutions and on developing in young people a critical, thoughtful approach to mass communication messages. It also emphasizes information transmission and opinion formation. The curriculum is sequential, with suggested lessons and activities for each of three levels: the elementary (Grades I-III), the middle (Grades IV-VI), and the upper grades. The major subdivisions of mass communication studies are: communication in society, mass communication, forms of expression in the mass media, and understanding the message. Each of these topics is divided into several sub-headings or units of study such as an historical survey of communication, institutions transmitting informatio, message types, and the effects of a message. The description of each unit includes the purpose, examples and questions for class discussion, and topics for individual and group projects. (JK)

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MASS COMMUNICATION EDUCATION
IN THE FINNISH COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL

The present paper is a translation of the chapters on mass communication education published in the Report of the Curriculum Committee in 1970. This is the first time when mass communication has been included in the Finnish curriculum. Of course some teachers have been alert enough to use films and newspapers in class, but up to now mass communication has not been separated from other subjects as an independent educational domain.

The suggested curriculum makes explicit its <u>society-centered approach</u> which has been chosen as a frame of reference instead of an aesthetic or medium-bound approach, characteristic of earlier curricula on mass media (e.g. film education). Information transmission and opinion formation have been emphasized, but the focus is on mass media as social institutions which determine the contents of mass communication.

The present curriculum should not be conceived as a coherent and sufficient body of educational contents, but rather as a preliminary collection of examples, meant to be an aid to the teacher in his work at the various levels of the comprehensive school.

Helsinki, December 1970

Finnish National Commission for Unesco and the Finnish Broadcasting Company, organizers of a Unesco-supported roundtable conference "Communication in 1980" on mass communication research and policy

EM 008 910

FROM PART I OF THE REPORT:

2.4.7.3. Education and the mass media

Mass media have become important sources of human information. We are in daily contact with them. Particularly children and youngsters spend plenty of time, not infrequently several hours, with them. Almost all children of preschool age, and a majority of teenagers obtain most of what they know through mass media. These media influence public opinion and they are the channels for obtaining new knowledge. They provide children with an abundancy of material, both curricular and other kind. It is not of secondary importance to learn how to make use of mass media and how to maintain a critical attitude to the information mediated through these channels and other sources. The formal educational criteria can be easier to attain if mass media are made use of in a relevant way, and if the so-called permiability principle is applied at all levels.

Mass media education trains the children to perceive and interpret communicated messages. It aims at a selective and critical decoding of messages. Its goal is also to encourage pupils to develop their own view about messages transmitted through mass media and other channels of information.

Attaining these goals requires knowledge of the development of information transmission and its meaning in the present society and in the world in general.

It is important to find out what kind of means of expression are used in mass media, what types of programs are transmitted, and how the various messages influence people. In order to attain these goals it is important to pay attention both to the nature of information the children are supplied with and to the methods of instruction. A good way of developing critical thinking and personal views is to work in groups that allow for free expression of views and which do not try to persuade the members to conform to a single answer, but which consider

alternatives and point out the consequences of different standpoints and attitudes. Information should be available in a form which lends itself for independent finding of answers and explanations, and instigates making of questions and formulating problems. Mass media education can promote understanding and accepting of heterogenous views and a sympathy for divergent thinking. It can promote international understanding. The structure of knowledge transmitted at different levels will remain the same, but step by step the program will be extended to cover more intricate questions and elaborate methods, and shifts of emphasis can take place.

Mass media education does not separate between the formal and material goals. Here is an example to show how close connections there are, on one hand, between knowledge acquisition and social and moral education, on the other.

FROM PART II OF THE REPORT:

Mass Communication Education in the Comprehensive School

Mass communication education is part of cognitive education; its formal and material objectives are closely interrelated. There is also a close relationship between mass communication, and social and ethical education, as pointed out in Part I of this report, Section 2.4.7.3. (see pp. 2 - 3). A description of the subdivision of mass communication education will be found in Appendix I of Part I.

Applications of mass communication have been included in various subjects and studies: environmental studies, civic studies, mother tongue (Finnish or Swedish), history, social studies and art. In the curriculum reference is made to the mass communication study program, presented here. Subjects suitable for mass communication education will be given in parentheses.

The study program described here is based on the idea that all four subdivisions of mass communication studies will be treated at three levels, the elementary (Grades I - III), the middle (IV - VI) and the upper grades. This arrangement will affect the work of the teacher: he must know what has been taught at lower levels. Otherwise he cannot expand and deepen his approach, focus on new things and take into account changes in learning capacity and children's interests.

Some parts of the study program are profuse, allowing for the possibility of choice, where as some others appear fairly scanty. The examples are often formulated as questions, ready for use as such. The child ought to develop an independent way of considering problems. He must look for information in text-books and reference books. Free discussion is a form of learning suitable for mass communication studies. Some of the examples are appropriate group projects. The studies will be enriched by excursions.

School should subscribe a sufficient number of newspapers and periodicals representing various political parties, providing an impartial balance, as well as independent ones. It is also necessary to follow radio and television programs, and it is often important to tape programs ahead of time. Mass communication instruction should be concrete and close to life.

The study program described here has gradually evolved from a provisional report on audiovisual education. Experimentation and future experience should allow for a plan well integrated with the various subjects. The present plan, however, might yield an adequate basis for developing this subject, so important in modern society, at the comprehensive school level.

The present program large enough for a special course in mass communication, if the statutes allow for such a course. It can also give hints how to develop the activities of a club in this field.

1. Communication in society

1.1. General

Interpersonal contacts consist to a large extent of the exchange of information; this occurs primarily through language. With the development of human society, communication has increased in importance. Mass communication media have developed to allow for large distance communication. With time, these media have increased in significance, and they have come to exercise a considerable influence on society and its development.

1.2. A historical survey of communication

1.2.1. General

It seems useful to distinguish at least three different levels of communication: the power-holders (rulers, high secular and church officials), the merchants and common people. These three levels differ in both means and direction of communication. Apart from these, we shall consider the development of communication. A chronological sequence of events is not necessary here; examples represent fields which best illuminate the matter under consideration.

1.2.2. The lower grades
(Finnish/Swedish, environmental studies, Grades I - II; civic studies, Grade III)

Primarily an account, brought in at relevant points in the appropriate subjects, of the historical development of the manner and media of information transmission, on the three levels mentioned above.

Examples:

Rulers: Stories illustrating how ancient rulers and clergymen sent messages and orders to each other and to their subjects. Discussion of the methods of communication.

Merchants: itinerant merchants as transmittors of information (discussion of the quality and sources of information). How was information formerly transmitted from Helsinki to Rovaniemi? How reliable was this information?

Common people: communication in former times (long distances, lack of telephones, mail, radio or television. What kind of messages can be communicated by drum, by fire or smoke signals? What demands do these place on the receiver?) Discussion of the importance of markets, fairs and entertainment songs.

The development of mass communication: invention of the printing press, the spreading of literacy; radio and television; information satellites.

1.2.3. The middle grades
(civic studies; history)

Communication on the three levels mentioned above, and the development of mass communication, will be discussed from the point of view of speed and reliability of communication. A more detailed account can be given of the invention of printing and of the significance of increasing literacy than was possible in the lower grades. Similarly, discussion of which areas of society have been most affected by communication, and what the effect of the development of communication has been in these areas.

Examples:

How did the rulers mentioned in biblical history communicate with each other and with their people, and about what? How did the people transmit messages to the ruler (reliability of messages)? Messengers and heralds. Religious wars and pilgrimages. Church proclamations and announcements.

Merchants: the twofold influence of the merchants. Their needs created forms of communication, and they also acted as transmittors. Why was i important for the merchants to obtain information about sinking of ships, other accidents, the success or failure of crops, etc.? What was the quality and reliability of information transmitted by merchants? A rumor experiment in the class. How long did it take for a piece of information to be transmitted by a merchant from Southern to Northern Finland?

Common people: tramps, itinerant shoemarkers and tinkers. How large was the area to which they spread information, what kind of information and how reliably? Compare popular ballads with

minstrel songs (the former were meant for the people, the latter for the court).

The development of mass communication: the meaning of the invention of printing to the ordinary man. What kind of literature was first printed? The first newspapers; whom were they meant for, what prevented the ordinary people from becoming acquainted with them? When did literacy begin to spread in Finland, and how did this affect the propagation of information? The first newspapers in Finland. Then and for what purpose were the first news agencies started? In what way, and how quickly, could they transmit information?

How did the invention of the radio affect communication? What changes occurred in the role of the newspaper? What has been the contribution of television and of information satellites?

1.2.4. The upper grades
(history; social studies)

Main emphasis will be on the present situation in the light of history, i.e. what historical factors have contributed to the development of the present communication network; pay attention to mass communication and its future.

Examples:

Power holders: how has communication between the ruler and the people developed during the historical period? In what respect has communication become easier? How do we now obtain information from decision makers, and about what kind of things? In what respect have the mass media replaced direct communication from the rulers? How has the role of the church in information transmission changed? Which forms of communication have been taken over by other officials? What is the relation between democratization of the form of government and the development of communication?

Merchants: Discussion of the origin of news agencies and their relation to the commercial need for information (quality of information, location of news agencies). A chronological survey of the role of merchants as transmittors of information in various historical periods. The significance of merchants as innovators in customs, fashions and products. Merchants as transmittors of foreign ideas.

Common people: What means have ordinary people employed at different times to obtain and spread information (markets, church services, catechetical meetings etc.)? The quality and reliability of this information. Compare possibilities of a common to man obtain and spread information today to those at the beginning of this century.

Development of mass communication: the origin, sources, location of news agencies; the reliability of their information, their way of working and the kind of information gathered. How has this affected the present situation, i.e. in terms of which parts of the world we have reliable information about and which not. How might this concentration of the news-agency network in the "civilized" countries distort our view of the world? For what purpose were newspapers founded? To whom were they addressed, and what kind of information did they spread? For what purposes were radio devices first used? When were they first used to spread information to a large audience? What new possibilities were created by the radio and the television? (speed, animation, communication with the illiterate etc.) How has the development of the mass media network affected people's opportunities of controlling the actions of the decision-makers? How has communication between different continents been affected by the development of information satellites? What advantages and what disadvantages might result from the wide-spread use of satellites?

1.3. The Meaning of communication in modern society

1.3.1. General

Discussion of the meaning of communication on three levels: a) local, b) national and c) international. Extend the discussion also to countries with different types of government; emphasize the need of communication in a democracy. Start the discussion from situations and issues familiar to the pupil; proceed then into wider contexts and problems, and concentrate then on the relative importance of different issues.

1.3.2. Lower grades
(environmental studies, Grades I - II; civic studies, Grade III)

The meaning of communication at the local level:

What kind of information do the children obtain about events in their own neighborhood, where do they get this information from, and what does it mean a) to the child, b) his family, c) and the school? What is the significance of this information to the Finns, and to larger groups of people? When necessary, the teacher can tape-record radio broadcasts (news reports, regional reports etc.).

Examples

The pupils should familiarize themselves. The local newspapers will be introduced. What kind of useful information do they contain? The children will listen to the local radio and discuss the programs and the information they have obtained. What regional program can the pupil listen to at home? What are the other sources of information about local events, besides the local newspaper and the radio?

Information on the national level

How can we get information about events in other parts of Finland? What kind of home events are useful for every Finn to know about? Particular emphasis on things related to the child.

Examples

What are the sources of information about national events (radio, television, newspapers, periodicals, movies, books, etc.)? The concept of newspaper, periodical etc. Why is information e.g. about an expected influenza epidemic important also to a pupil?

Information on the international level

By means of examples and questions, show how we obtain information about foreign events and why they are important to the pupil, to Finns in general and to all people. How is information is transmitted in different countries and under different conditions?

Examples

How do we find out what happens abroad? What kind of information about other countries and peoples is of interest to the children, and what do they consider important? Collect pictures of children from other countries; use magazines and books. Look at the pictures and discuss the differences and similarities between an African child, a Chinese child, a Finnish child etc.; try to be objective (appearance, dress, housing, food).

Discuss which news item is more important and why: e.g. 1) two persons have died in a traffic accident on the highway between Helsinki and Lahti, and 2) in Hiroshima in Japan there has been the biggest earthquake in ten years.

1.3.3. The middle grades (civic studies)

Information on the local level

Compare various local mass media as means of communication at the local level in particular. Use examples.

Examples

Attend a meeting of the municipal council or listen to a tape recording of a meeting, and compare it a) to the report of the meeting in a local newspaper, b) to the report in a regional newspaper. Are all the discussed issues mentioned in the reports? Are the issues reported in the paper the most important ones in general, and from the pupil's point of view? Why is it good for the public that the council's decisions are reported in the local press?

Information on the national level

A penetrating discussion on sources of information about events in Finland, and the importance of this information to every citizen, including the pupil himself. Discussion of the kind of information every citizen should have, and what this means to the child.

Examples

Collect various party newspapers and so-called independent ones, and compare their reports of the same discussion or decision in the Parliament. Tape several radio news-reports, or cut out news items from the papers over a period of several days, and discuss their importance a) to the individual, b) to the Finns in general. What difficulties will be encountered for example in transmitting news from a remote village in Northern Lapland?

Information on the international level

Discussion: what kind of things should all people in the world know about. Consider also the problems of communication in the developing countries, the significance of communication, and the media suitable for spreading information in those areas.

Use examples to illustrate the importance of obtaining information about other countries, and how we can obtain such information. How does communication affect international relations?

Examples

What would be the consequences (to economic life, government, the private citizen) if communication between Finland and other countries would suddenly break off? Collect foreign and home news from TV during one evening and compare their significance a) for a Finnish citizen, b) in general for all people. How is the significance of an event related to the geographical distance play a part, in what should it be disregarded (e.g. traffic accidents, a two-headed calf, water pollution, low housing standard, famine in India)? What difficulties should be taken into account in transmitting news and information from the developing countries (language, long distances, lack of technical equipment, lack of personnel to acquire and transmit information, isolation). How do these factors affect the reliability and speed of communication?

1.3.4. The upper grades
(Finnish/Swedish; social studies; civic studies)

Local information transmission

Through discussion and assignments, a deeper understanding of the significance of local communication ought to be reached.

Examples

Visit the meeting of the municipal council. What kind of local information is important a) to people in that area, b) to Finns in general. What would be the best channels for communicating this information? How is public information about council decisions related to managing municipal affairs, and why is it important for the public to be allowed to attend council meetings?

Examine five to ten most recent issues of the local newspaper, and make a list of the items covered. What kind of things receive much attention, and what do not.

National information transmission

Examples

Discussion and examples to illustrate the importance of communication particularly in a country with a democratic form of government. How does communication take place in countries with different form of government (communication controlled by business, by the state; independent of these)? What are the advantages and the drawbacks of each system? How does the communication system relate to what is transmitted?

Collect news from various party papers about collective bargaining contracts, public expenditures, the national budget etc.. Compare how these issues are treated in different papers.

International communication

Discussion about the role of communication in preserving peace in the world, in cultural contacts, and in extending the concept of responsibility. Discussion of the relationship between the subjective world view and "objective truth".

Examples

The importance of rapid communication in cases of natural catastrophy. What is the significance of communication e.g. in the attempt to preserve peace? What is the role of television in spreading knowledge and understanding of different countries, and in the dissemination of fashion and customs? Compare the folkmusic of different countries when there was no radio nor television, and "modern folkmusic" (hit tunes). Is the difference today smaller than before? Is the time devoted to sports news in accordance with its importance?

2. Mass Communication

2.1. The mass communication event

2.1.1. General

The aim is to help the pupil to understand the nature of information transmission and that of mass communication, and the difference between the two. The basic elements of mass communication can be explained in the lower grades: a large and unspecified audience, a certain distance between the sender and the receiver of the message (necessitating the use of technical devices, such as radio, TV, newspaper or film) and a continuous mutual contact between the sender and the receiver. Discussion of the limitations and drawbacks imposed by this form of communication, and of its undeniable advantages. Possibly also discussion of the different communication needs of various audience groups.

2.1.2. The lower grades
(Environmental studies, I - II; civic studies, III; Finnish/Swedish)

Use drawings to explain the difference between mass communication and other types of information transmission (a concrete presentation is necessary). It is enough if the basic idea is understood. Mass communication messages are transmitted by radio and television, and they do not include the possibility of feedback. News reports, for example, are meant for all, while other programs, such as children's programs, are for a restricted audience only.

2.1.3. The middle grades
(Finnish/Swedish, civic studies)

A penetrating discussion on the mass communication event and the drawbacks and advantages of different mass media. What limitations do the various media impose on what can be expressed?

Examples

What kind of observations cannot be transmitted by radio or television? What kind of ideas or programs are worth transmitting through these media?

2.1.4. The upper grades
(Finnish/Swedish)

Discussion of the possible ways of compensating for the lack of contact between the sender and the receiver of the message. How can we check the accuracy of the message, and how to acquire independent information?

Examples

How can we participate in a press debate? (whom should we contact?) How can we find out what the editor of a radio program has really meant by his message? How can a debate about some interesting issue be brought about between people not in direct contact? How and where can the accuracy of information obtained from the radio, newspaper or other source be checked?

2.2. Institutions transmitting information

2.2.1. General

The first step is to give an account of our institutions of information transmisson: school, official announcements, books, newspapers and periodicals, radio, television, film etc. Radio, TV, the film, newspapers and magazines differ from the others in certain respects. They are relatively rapid, they reach a large audience either simultaneously or practically simultaneously, and they communicate information by means of a technical medium.

For what purposes were the various media first developed? Discuss the property and power relations within the various media. What is the effect of these relations on the use of the media - who can use them, what kind of information can be transmitted, and how to get permission to use them?

2.2.2. The lower grades
(environmental studies, I - II; civic studies, III)

What mass media do we have, and for what purpose were they introduced. A separate discussion of radio and television, and of newspapers, loval, regional and country-wide. Periodicals can also be included in the discussion.

Examples

Bring various newspapers and magazines to the class, and discuss the purposes they are for. Discuss the system of subscription, and the system of radio and TV licenses.

2.2.3. The middle grades
(civic studies)

A more thoroughgoing discussion of the various communication institutions. What are the functions and objectives of radio and television, by whom are these objectives established, who controls the media, who owns them? The meaning of radio and television to the individual. Newspapers will also be discussed more extensively at this stage; a distinction will be made between papers controlled by political parties, and so-called independent papers run as business enterprises. What are the objectives of the press? Who controls the newspapers? Who determines their policy (the writer or the owner)? Who owns them? Etc.

The economic basis of the various media will be compared. In particular, newspapers can be compared as to the number of advertisements they contain. The advertising income of the most wide-spread commercially run papers is considerably lager than that from sales. The school library should acquire the newspapers of various parties. Also discuss the sources of information of the various mass media.

Examples

Who can start publishing a newspaper or a magazine? Why do we need different media, such as radio, TV, newspapers and magazines? Why do we need party newspapers? What are the advantages of each party having its own channel of information? Compare the agencies from which the party papers get their news about foreign events. How is the same event treated in same day issue by the various party papers? For what purpose are newspapers published? (papers published by organizations, customer

publications, commercially run periodicals such as professional or hobby magazines, entertainment magazines, documentary magazines, women's magazines, scandal papers, romance and adventure magazines, cartoon strip magazines etc.)

2.2.4. The upper grades
(social studies; civic studies)

At this stage, a thoroughgoing discussion of the objectives, control and ownership of the various mass media - in particular of radio and television - will be possible. Who determines the policy of a national broadcasting company, by a newspaper or by a film company? What is the role of the owner, those who control the medium and those who write and produce the programs? Consider also the sources from which the media obtain their information and news, and discuss the interest groups which try to influence the various media.

Examples

What proportion of the cost of publishing a newspaper is paid by the advertiser? In what ways can the advertiser put pressure on the newspaper and thus affect what is published? What about commercial television? Which system is better: to hare a variety of newspapers with different types of information, or to have one papers representing only one way of thinking - to have only a political party paper or only commercial papers? What are the advantages and the drawbacks of the former system, i.e. having various newspapers representing different groups and different systems of values? What would be the ideal model of information transmission? What are the requirements for establishing a newspaper?

3. Forms of expression in the mass media

3.1. Techniques

3.1.1. General

The techniques characteristic of the various media are explained only to the extent necessary for an understanding of their functioning. For the most part, a brief account of the technical means of production is sufficient. To see in practice how the messages in the various media come about can make the understanding of the functional techniques easier at all levels.

3.1.2. The lower grades
(environmental studies, Grades I - II; civic studies, III; Finnish/Swedish)

The teacher can use drawings and charts to explain briefly the process of newspaper printing and the technical stages of producing a radio or television program. A visit to the local printing press and to the regional radio center can be made.

Assignments

What are the professions or skills required in making a newspaper or a magazine, a radio or a television program? Editing a class newspaper yields good practice.

3.1.3. The middle grades
(civic studies; Finnish/Swedish)

Elaboration of the stages involved in preparing a radio or a television program and a newspaper. A closer examination of the methods of collecting material for various programs or articles, and integration of the material into a single whole.

A consideration of various types of programs and articles, and differences in making them. What type of article or program can be prepared ahead of time, and what type has to be produced in the last minute?

Examples

The class can pay a visit to the local printing press and radio broadcasting center, or ask these for booklets describing the techniques. What machines and equipment are necessary in printing a newspaper, in producing a radio program, a TV program or a newspaper? Editing of a school magazine.

3.1.4. The upper grades
(social studies; civic studies; Finnish/Swedish; student guidance)

At this stage the students will become familiar with the press, radio and television jobs. Various production stages, particularly editing, will be reexamined. The technical devices for encoding the messages of mass media also deserve some discussion.

Examples

Visit a newspaper printing plant and the regional radio broadvasting center. Ask experts in these fields for additional information about the work process (in particular the editors of different sections of the newspaper and those responsible for various types of radio programs). What kind of work units can you find in the newspaper office, in the radio and television? What kind of professional training is required of people working for the mass media?

3.2. Means of expression

Discussion of the means of communicating a message through various media should start from the content, i.e. what are the alternatives for expressing various ideas. Visual communication deserves special attention; what can be communicated through a picture, and what a visual presentation can add to verbal expression. (Compare the study plan for art.)

3.2.2. The lower grades
(environmental studies, Grades I - II; civic studies, III; Finnish/Swedish; art)

Discussion of the means of expression available to various mass media, and how they can be used to achieve a desired effect.

Examples

How are important news expressed in the newspaper (headlines, pictures, location, print type etc.)? How are important news communicated through television (order and time of presentation, picture material, experts interviewed etc.)? What kind of pictures express disapproval? Collect the most important news in a newspaper issue and from the same day news broadcasts in the radio and television. Classroom discussion of the criteria of importance used by these media. How does a picture support the verbal description in a newspaper or in a book, and what can the picture add to the message? When possible, show films and discuss the means of expression. How has a particular impression been achieved?

3.2.3. The middle grades
(Finnish/Swedish; art)

Discussion of the methods of emphasizing particular aspects in an article, in a program, or in a single news item. Plan the expression of various bried themes through various media. Study how different articles emphasize various points, and how this affects selecting the means of expression. Pay closer attention to the expressive language of the movies, and to the expressive methods of enriching a particular theme.

Examples

How can a single phrase or word be emphasized in writing? (underlining, italics etc.) How to do the same in a television program (use of picture material, interviews, statements by experts, close-ups etc.)? How can the idea of hunger be

effectively expressed by means of a single picture? What changes will be necessary if a brief text is attached to the picture? How to attach a picture to an extensive article on the same topic?

What kind of things do the newspapers focus on? What about an evening's television news? Compare one day issues of various party papers: what news do they consider "important"? Which topics and news are presented through pictures? What do these pictures contain and do they support the text? Answer the same question in terms of a TV program, e.g. the news.

3.2.4. The upper grades
(Finnish/Swedish; art)

By varying methods of expression try to achieve different impressions. Alternative ways of expressing various matters can be practiced. Discuss the use of pictures, and the message mediated by a picture.

Examples

How to make a topic look important, insignificant, surprising, or interesting for all? Present a matter in a 1) dramatic, 2) matter-of-fact way. On the basis of these examples, discuss which factors or aspects will be emphasized in each case, and what would be the "best" or a correct way to express the matter. Plan a poster to relieve hunger among refugees. Examine the means of expression used by a movie to communicate various kinds of content and mood.

3.3. Message types

3.3.1. General

Here the message types of the various mass media will be discussed. The emphasis will be on messages, programs and periodicals with which the children come into contact with in

most Finnish homes. In these discussions, ethical standpoints should be avoided; nevertheless, the child should learn to choose between alternatives according to his own judgement and consideration. The children should learn to perceive the valves transmitted through various messages, and the implicit value judgements they contain. In discussing message types, so-called "bad" papers, programs and movies should not be avoided. A number of movies the youngsterssee in commercial movie theatres can be classified as "trash", according to general opinion. A wholesale condemnation does not promote rational consideration of these products. It is necessary to discuss what they communicate, what they appeal to, why people go to see them etc. A matter-of-fact discussion is more likely to lead to a critical attitude than is a forced opinion.

3.3.2. The lower grades
(Finnish/Swedish, environmental studies, Grades I - II; civics, Grade III)

The children will learn to know what papers and periodicals are available, what their content is, and what kind of programs you can find in the radio an in the television. At this stage, the main objective is to learn to distinguish between different message types, such as news, documentary reports (of real events), fictional descriptions, entertainment and advertising.

Examples

What are the differences between commercials and short films? What is the difference between news and other programs? How do documentaries differ from serials? Which TV programs fascinate children? What message type do these programs represent?

News

Characteristics of news reports, and the information sources of news agencies will be discussed as well as the meaning of the news to an individual. What kind of news are presented by the various media?

Examples

Pick out the news in a daily issue. Discuss what an individual can benefit from news, and what news mean for children. Look at TV-news at home one evening, and discuss the content at school. Listen to the radio news at school, and discuss the content.

Documentaries (Finnish/Swedish)

Discuss the characteristics of a documentary account and the means of photography and story telling.

Examples

Look at a documentary film on television, and discuss how it differs from a film based on fiction, and from reality.

Fiction and entertainment

Discuss the character of fictional descriptions, stories, films and plays with plots, cartoon strips and serial films, and their relation to reality. Watch children's television programs in the evening at home and elaborate on them the next day at school. Examine magazine narratives and discuss them.

Examples

Discuss how a fictional children's movie is related to reality and what it is trying to communicate. Discuss the TV serials popular among children and their relation to reality (the characters in them, are they common people, could they exist in ordinary life, what do they do for a living etc.)

Discuss the popular children's magazines, their content, and the stories in them.

Advertising
(environmental studies, Grades I-II; civic studies, Grade III)

Discuss the difference between advertising and other contents in a newspaper or a magazine; the difference between a TV commercial and other programs. Is advertising necessary? Is all that the advertisements tell true? What are the differences between the people you see in advertisements and people in real life?

Examples

Collect various advertisements from the magazines available in school. How do they differ from other contents? What kind of commercials are there on television? Who is actually speaking in the commercial? (not the actor, but the merchant.) Are all the things described in the advertisement true? Discuss this question on the basis of specific examples taken from advertisement texts. What unnecessary expenditures would we have if we believed everything in advertisements? Dramatize a TV commercial.

3.3.3. The middle grades
(Finnish/Swedish; civic studies; art)

At this stage, a thorough discussion of the message types in the media will take place. Why do we need various messages types? What can be expressed through each type of message?

Examples

Study the program pamflets for radio and television; What message types does an evening broadcast consist of? Examine the advertisements displayed by a magazine stand or a magazine catalogue, and discuss what kind of magazines exist. What kind of writings and articles do the different magazines contain?

News

Why do we need news reports, and about what? Examine the sources of news: who can send news to the Finnish News Agency? How do we obtain news from other countries? Give a detailed account of the Finnish News Agency and of news agencies in general. What makes a news important; what is the content of an important iten, whom does it concern, what will be the effects and how is the news value related to the geographical distance of the event?

Examples

Follow the radio news reports systematically for one week at a particular time of a day, and tape them (the teacher). Discuss them in class: one group can tell about the contents, another can look up all the difficult or strange words and explain their meaning, a third group can find out what sources were used, etc. What news agencies are there (study reference works)? The news in the party papers can be analyzed in the same way as the radio news. How are the news emphasized in different papers? Does the way of emphasizing appear meaningful in each case?

Documentaries

Discuss the contribution of the producer, the director, the script-writer and the cameraman in making a documentary film. It will now be possible to discuss in detail how a documentary film reflects reality, and compare it with fiction and e.g. a scientific article.

Examples

Articles can be planned by different groups describing the housing standard in the community. Why do the articles differ from each other? Plan a TV-documentary about unemployment, sport etc., as a group project. Watch a documentary in television and discuss it. Read a documentary report in a

magazine and discuss it at school. Think about the role of picture and photography in a documentary. How to choose the way of presenting the object? How to take the film shots?

Fiction

Discuss the various kinds of fiction and entertainment that exist; special emphasis on the type of fiction popular among this age-group. The pupils should also learn to understand the content and values mediated by these forms, and the implicit values they contain.

Examples

How many of the pupils listen to hits and like them? If there are many, a thoroughgoing discussion can take place. Collect the words of the most popular songs and discuss their content. Discuss the magazines most popular among young people, and those meant for them. What kind of things do these magazines concentrate on? How common are the persons, the ideas and the problems which are discussed by young people's magazines? Dramatize comic strips and stories popular among this age group. Then discuss why the performance might have been experienced as absurd. What role types are presented in these magazines, and how common are they in real life? Look at films popular among young people and discuss them. Also look at so-called high level artistic films with significant contents, and compare them to the former. Discuss the TV programs, serials, plays and films, pop concerts and other forms of music favoured by the young.

Advertising

A more detailed discussion of advertising. What is the way of life they describe, what is their purpose, their relation to reality, are they necessary, and is there some other better way of distributing information about products than advertising. Again, how much real information is communicated by an advertisement, and in what respects they cannot be trusted.

Examples

Examine a week's magazines to see what advertisements they contain. Are all the products advertised really necessary? Are the most often advertised products the most necessary? What kind of people appear in advertisements (age, sex, clothing, physical charm, surroundings, etc.)? Study a week's magazines and pick out the advertisements showing a woman. What kind of picture of a woman do the magazines present, what products is she offered? What is her age, appearance, clothing, in what kind of situations do you see her, what benefit will she derive, according to the advertisement, if she buys the product etc.? Will the product really yield what is promised in the advertisement? Collect a bunch of advertisements and discuss how much real information they convey.

3.3.4. The upper grades
(social studies; civic studies)

News

A penetrating study of news agencies and other news sources will take place. The criteria for importance of a news item will be discussed: the dramatic nature of an event, its unexpectedness, widespread consequences in time, in quantity, or for a specific area, strangeness, etc. How does' the distance of an event affect its importance? How does the concentration of the news agencies in the so-called "civilized world" affect our view of the world?

Examples

In which parts of the world are news agencies located? In which countries does Finland have radio correspondents and commentators? From which countries do we receive picture material for television news? List the unfamilar words in a couple of radio or TV evening news and look them up in the dictionary. Listen to the radio news during a class session and discuss the meaning these news to an individual. Tape a news

broadcast - e.g. the mid-afternoon news - every day during a week. What topics were discussed, and what was considered important? According to what criterion?

Documentaries

Documentaries can be planned starting from different points of view or with different attitudes; how this affects the final result can be discussed. What approach is 'good' can be considered from the point of view of a nation or all mankind. Documentary accounts on important social questions can be looked at and discussed. Other related material can be obtained, and a documentary theme developed further.

Examples

Plan two television documentaries about pollution; one group could take the view of the citizens, the other that of a factory owner. Which approach appears better for a television film? Look at documentaries and articles of social significance, and discuss their approach. What is the greatest difficulty of the documentary producer in making socially committed programs? What kind of truth and what point of view should he communicate?

Fiction and entertainment

Discuss the show business and the forms of entertainment that attract the young. What are the ways of entertaining the audience, what motives do these programs appeal to? Discuss literary fiction, both light and "serious" literature, and magazines. Look at plays, movies and serials and discuss them. What is their relation to reality, what are their explicit and implicit values?

Examples

What kind of feminine role is popular in television thriller series? What professions, what income level etc. do the people in them represent? Compare what you see in TV with your own

experience. What is the content of the sensation-and-scandal magazines? To that aspects of human nature do they appeal? Why do people write about their private life and give pictures to these publications? Describe hit themes.

Advertisements

An analysis of advertising and related questions. Discuss the difference between consumer information and advertising. Who pays for advertisements, how much do they cost? Are they always relevant? Discuss the consumer needs created by advertising.

Examples

Look for advertisements meant to attract the young. To what needs do they appeal? Discuss thoroughly the world view transmitted by advertisements: what factors do they emphasize, what kind of individual do they favour, what do they appeal to? Study 20-30 advertisements to see what actual information they convey. Find out from different periodicals what their advertisements cost. Try to find out how much television advertising costs. What factories produce detergents? (The same producer may produce several different brands to compete in the market.) Who pays for their advertising? Discuss the difference between advertising and consumer information, and the possibility of substituting the latter for the former.

4. Understanding of messages

4.1. General

In the preceding sections, we have treated the mass media - making programs, writing articles and the contents of messages - primarily from the point of view of the sender. Now, we shift the emphasis to the receiver: who receives the messages, individual variation in decoding and understanding of messages,

what they mean to them and how the messages affect their behavior.

4.2. The physical dimension

4.2.1. General

How large a proportion of the Finnish people have the various media at their disposal, and what is the situation elsewhere in the world, e.g. in the developing nations? How many people are dependent only on one or a few media, and how does this affect their world view? Discuss the choice of program and reading habits. How does a restricted and narrow choice affect the way in which the individual perceives his environment.

4.2.2. The lower grades
(environmental studies, Grades I - II; civic studies, Grade III)

Discuss how far a message can be sent by different media. Study the Finnish postal system, and how rapidly a message can be transmitted by various media to different places in Finland.

Examples

How far can a message be transmitted by drum, by smoke signals, by radio or television? To whom and how quickly can messages be sent by radio or TV? How long does it take for the mail from Helsinki to reach the pupil's home town, or a remote village in Northern Lapland? Why do some homes get less newspapers than others? What kind of things do children read in the papers? What kind of radio and TV-programs do they attend to? What do their parents read, listen to or watch? What are the most popular radio and television programs?

4.2.3. The middle grades
(civic studies; geography)

What factors influence the availability of mass media in various countries (level of development etc.). How will the information satellites and visual telephones affect communication in the future? Discuss the distribution of radio and television in Finland, and the circulation of various periodicals.

Examples

Group discussion of the communication difficulties still existing in Finland. How should the needs of various groups (children, old people etc.) be taken into consideration in the papers, radio and television? What are the communication difficulties in countries where the distances are long and the people are illiterate and poor?

4.2.4. The upper grades
(social studies; civic studies)

At this level the distribution of the various media in Finland will be discussed in detail. Find out how many Finnish families have the various media at their disposal and how narrow or wide are the views transmitted. Discuss the difficulties involved in making use of foreign articles, programs and movies. To whom are these available and to whom not?

Examples

Using statistics and reference works, prepare a list of the distribution of the various media in Finland: how many possess a radio or television apparatus, how often these are used daily, what programs are popular, how many get no newspaper, how many only one, and how many more than one. What is the circulation of different types of periodicals in Finland; the independent (commercial) press, the right-wing, left-wing, press and other papers? What makes difficult to obtain messages from abroad? What kind of message is easy, or difficult, to receive?

4.3. Understanding the message

4.3.1. General

What are the difficulties in decoding mass media messages? What demands does mass communication place on the recipient? What specific problems are connected with the messages of the different media? To a certain extent, a distinction can be drawn between a) understanding the "language" of the media and b) understanding the content of the message.

4.3.2. The lower grades (Finnish/Swedish)

Discussion of the conditions necessary for understanding the messages transmitted by the various media. What promotes and what inhibits understanding?

Examples

Who is able to understand smoke signals, fire or Morse code signals? Who is able decode messages printed in a newspaper? What means are used in a movie to show that the action is shifting from one place to another, and how do we know that it is still the same movie even though the action is taking place somewhere else, etc. Read brief extracts (fairy tale, newspaper, comic strip, non-fiction prose, law text etc.) and see who has understood the content. Look at TV and listen to radio programs, and try to express their content in your own words; discuss difficult points. Read easier texts in the newspaper and tell about them in your own words; discussion.

4.3.3. The middle grades (Finnish/Swedish)

Discuss how the writer or the producer takes into account his audience, and the problems which come about. What kind of messages have a precise content, meant to be understood in a single and unambiguous way, and what kind of messages can be interpreted in several ways?

Examples

What kind of television programs are difficult for the children to understand? What makes them difficult? How can we learn to understand them? Whom can we ask for help? What kind of newspaper articles are difficult to understand? How can pictures help us to understand them? How does the producer take his audience into account, for instance in children's or youngsters' programs? List the favourite television programs. What is attractive in the children's programs and what is not? What is the information presented e.g. by a traffic sign or an alarm clock? How does this information differ from speech?

4.3.4. The upper grades
(Finnish/Swedish, drawing)

How does understanding of a message depend on the familiarity of the words and concepts? What is the role of sight and hearing in understanding, and how do they vary from one individual to another? How does e.g. the level of abstraction affect comprehension? Discussion of how the various message types are meant to be understood.

Examples

Try to express the same message at different levels of difficulty and abstraction. One or more students may prepare these messages, and the class then decides whether there is any difference between them and what factors affect understanding. Pictures are then added to the messages, and their effect on decoding the message will then be discussed. Listen to radio programs and discuss their message. What difficult points did the students notice? Look at television programs of different types (news, documentary, experimental film or play). How unanimous are the students about the messages of the various programs? On what points do the interpretations differ most, and why? Listen to the TV sound without the picture, and watch the picture without the sound. Discuss the way in which the sound and the picture both affect comprehension of the message.

4.4. The meaning of the message to the receiver

Earlier, we have focussed on understanding the "code". Now we shall discuss the role of interest, familiarity and dramaticalness in understanding and accepting the message. This is primarily a question of "psychological closeness" of the message.

4.4.2. The lower grades (environmental studies, Grades I - II; civic studies, Grade III)

Discussion of the topics that interest children, and how this sphere could be extended. Discuss with children about the factors which make for a good program, a good article, or movie.

Examples

How can we make a program to focus the child's attention on pollution or damage? Consider the alternatives: to take the children to see a polluted lake, take pictures of it and show them to others; invite an expert to talk about pollution (how to prevent him from being too difficult to understand?); to look up information about pollution in a book; to interview people who live near a polluted lake; invite a child who lives by such a lake to talk to the class, etc. How does a producer of children's programs take into account his audience?

Watch and listen to programs, films and stories which make a complex problem understood by the child.

4.4.3. The middle grades (Finnish/Swedish)

Discuss the role of dramatization and personal identification in transmitting a message. Apparently the message becomes thus more tangible; but this is probably not the way to promote development of a critical attitude and making generalizations.

Examples

Tape news reports; which items concern everybody, which concern young people and children in particular? How to facilitate understanding of news? How are the possibilities for identification taken into account in a movie or a television play? Compare stories with dramas based on them. Which is more effective: the written or the dramatized version?

4.4.4. The upper grades
(Finnish/Swedish)

Discuss the factors which make a program important and attractive to an individual. When is it justified to aim at identification, and what are its preconditions? What adds to personal involvement in the program?

Examples

What are the matters that should concern everybody (water and air pollution, war, famine, violence etc.)? How to present these themes effectively a) on the radio, b) on television, c) in a movie and d) in the newspaper? What means of expression would be the most effective in presenting these themes a) to children, b) to old people, c) to young people? What are the dangers involved in dramatization or strong indentification?

4.5. The effects of the message

4.5.1. General

Discuss how mass media influence people, their cognition, world view, values and attitudes.

4.5.2. The lower grades
(environmental studies, Grades I - II; civic studies, Grade III)

Discuss how television and radio can affect the use of time and the content of our interests.

Examples

How many children attend children's programs regularly? How many come home just to watch these programs? How many try to stay up late to see an interesting and exciting program? How can staying up late influence getting up next morning? What topics are frightening? How do we get rid of such fear? What games do we learn from television, from the radio, from magazines?

4.5.3. The middle grades
(Finnish/Swedish; civic studies)

Discuss the intentional and unintentional effects of the mass media. The "hidden effects" may include e.g. learning through TV or magazines about sex roles or things in fashion.

Examples

What latent effects are deliberately embedded in e.g. antertainment programs? What is the effect of advertisements on the listener or the reader? About what kind of things can we obtain information from the radio, television or the newspapers? How can such information be used at school? What can we do if a TV program or movie is frightening? What kind of things frighten the pupils?

4.5.4. The upper grades
(social studies; civic studies; Finnish/Swedish)

Discuss the effect of television on our cognition and world view. Study the significance of television and radio as molders of a "universal culture".

Examples

How do the mass media mold our world view? How does this view correspond to reality? What factors affect which parts of the world, what kind of people and what kind of things in general come up in a facourable light in the mass media? In what way can news reports, for examples, distort our view of the world? (Location of news agencies, material transmitted by commercial news agencies, etc.) In what respects would our ideas and attitudes be different if we had no mass media? (Fashion, hit songs, pop culture, information about the developing nations, information about world politics etc.) What is the role of television and the movies in creating a universal fashion, common customs, entertainment industry etc. in different parts of the world? What will be the effect of television communication in the developing countries where information about other countries, nations, customs etc. has been scarce? Discuss the significance of mass communication from the point of view of nationalism vs. internationalism.